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Nuclear Threat as Race Hatred

ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Nuclear weapons, since their advent in the 1940s, have been regarded as so massively destructive and lethal that few have questioned whether particular groups might be targeted. Deaths across their geographical sweep seem to be total and indiscriminate. I argue, however, that it is no accident or coincidence that the Bomb was first used on a non-White nation; people of color in the United States such as Langston Hughes believed it would never be used against a White enemy. On the other hand, even if it is a race weapon, it is also still a species weapon, so that even if Blacks are first and worst targeted, as Jessica Hurley discovers, many Whites will suffer too. Since nuclear weapons as mass, seemingly indiscriminate killers have been studied and protested against, my aim is to examine their function as a race weapon. To claim, as some leaders have, that decades of deterrence have kept peace is to ignore the ambient fear and terror the Bomb has inflicted on the world. This is the ambient fear and terror that institutional racism inflicts on people of color. Charles W. Mills argues that a "racial contract" has existed for centuries to normalize a subpersonhood inflicted on people of color, and a particular targeting of nuclear weapons is consistent with that normalization. In a time of what Sabu Kohso calls "infinite ending," a dismantling of nuclear empires may be the world's best hope.

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I was born in the decade after World War II with a "touch of polio." Among other issues, my eyes were crossed—my left eye has amblyopia—and my thumbs could not bend back. Years later, as a college student in Ohio, I met several friends who, regardless of where they were born in the 1950s, had also been told that their health issues resulted from a "touch of polio." Still, my own "touch of polio" differed, insofar as I was born in Tokyo, and many Japanese mothers in those years feared that any health issues their newborns suffered were caused by the Bomb. My mother and her working-class friends, having had to drop out of elementary-level schooling late in the war, were susceptible to rumors about links between polio and the Bomb. I have seen no evidence that links polio to nuclear weapons, but I am less concerned here with the truth of the rumors than with what they tell us about postwar fears about the Bomb and the relationship of those fears to racism. My argument here is that, though the Bomb at its worst has been linked mostly to tensions among White nations—Russia on one side, western Europe and the United States on the other—its history as a weapon in the race war in the Pacific echoes in policies and strategies that make people of color its most vulnerable targets. I argue further that these policies mask the intensity of race hatred with the flat, dispassionate discourse of military and political planning.

Charles W. Mills argues that a global "racial contact" has, for more than a half-millennium, normalized White supremacy by preaching equality while practicing a subpersonhood for people of color (2022). By the logic of the contract, the colonized and people of color are "barbarian" because they remain "natural," while Whites are "civil" and thus cultured and superior, and alone deserving of rights and privileges of constructed equality (Mills 2022, pp. 12, 13). A racialized targeting of nuclear weapons would therefore adhere to the contract. Mills's idea drives the argument I develop below. My method is to apply his idea of subpersonhood to a reading of the history and culture of the Bomb. While the idea is closely aligned with principles informing my field, Ethnic Studies, it suffers the same absence that the field suffers: a vision of a future marked by neither a post-apocalypse nor the Bomb, which I will address at the end.

In her essay "The End of Imagination" Arundhati Roy argues for the racial component of the Bomb:

> Nuclear weapons pervade our thinking. Control our behavior. Administer our societies. Inform our dreams. They bury themselves like meat hooks deep in the base of our brains. They are purveyors of madness. They are the ultimate colonizer. Whiter than any white man that ever lived. The very heart of whiteness. (p. 101)

She opens her essay by recalling that India has acquired the Bomb, but she blames the United States for inventing and developing it. She adds, "It is such supreme folly to believe that nuclear weapons are deadly only if they're used. The fact that they exist at all, their very presence in our lives, will wreak more havoc than we can begin to fathom" (p. 101). This idea, set beside Mills's, suggests that the real target of the Bomb is not a rival White nation but the nations of subpersons. The Bomb is a tool of the racial contract.

The world today reads Japan as a nation on the cutting edge of a nuclear energy industry that, even in the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima disaster, perseveres and prospers. And that industry was largely launched by the 1950s Eisenhower-era "Atoms for Peace" program that aimed to replace Japanese memories of the Bomb with ambitions for atomic power as a peaceful energy source (Hurley, 2020). Japan's political and corporate elites want their nation to be known as a leader in nuclear energy, not as a victim of nuclear weapons. According to Mills's idea, the racial contract requires the complicity of at least a few of its victims: "there should be no essentialist illusions," he says, "about anyone's intrinsic 'racial' virtue. All peoples can fall into Whiteness under the appropriate circumstances" (2022, pp. 128–29).

Yet the history of Japanese victimhood refuses to be erased or replaced. Few survivors remain, but the testimony of many survivors is preserved in print and film, and the bombed cities appear both in histories of the U.S. facilities that processed uranium and plutonium for those bombs and in reports

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of failing efforts to clean those facilities and make them safe.[1] The Hanford site in southeastern Washington, which is little more than one hundred miles from my home and workplace, processed plutonium for the Nagasaki bomb, and its radioactive waste has been leaking for decades and threatens to continue leaking for decades to come.[2] Moreover, the bombed Japanese cities play small but crucial roles in contemporary fiction by Japanese American writers such as Ruth Ozeki (in *A Tale for the Time Being*) and Asako Serizawa (in *Inheritors*).[3] The governments of Japan and the United States have failed to banish nuclear terrors from the memory of survivors and the imagination of cultural activists.

Those terrors, even before U.S. leaders justified the Bomb and even as Americans celebrated it for ending the war, were evident to writers of color. Langston Hughes's character Simple insists that the Bomb was a race weapon that would never have been used on Germans, the White enemy (1990). To be sure, technologies of war were developing less for strategic purposes than for annihilation. As Sven Lindqvist writes in *A History of Bombing*, "The laws of war protect enemies of the same race, class, and culture. The laws of war leave the foreign and the alien without protection" (2001, p. 2). Against enemies deemed "savages and barbarians," then, anything is permissible (Lindqvist, 2001, p. 2). A weapon with the lethal reach of the Bomb might kill different peoples, but still it could target a particular—in Japan's case, a racialized—population. In *Infrastructures of Apocalypse* Jessica Hurley (2020) identifies such targeting:

> The nuclear mundane is the slow violence of the atomic age; like all slow violence, it distributes its damage unevenly. Poor people, people of color, Indigenous people, queer people, and women receive the least benefit from the nuclear complex and are most exposed to its harm: the most toxic nuclear sites are located on Indigenous land, and in proximity to poor communities and communities of color; predominantly Black cities are established as nuclear bait to protect the White suburbs, with the result that by 1984, an estimated 88 percent of the African American population would have been wiped out in the first minutes of a full-scale atomic conflict. (p. 14)

This does not mean that White lives would not be lost, only that the vicious nature of a society's racism lies in its construction of racialized others as the first and worst victims of nuclear weapons. Even left-leaning popular culture—*Dr Strangelove* comes to mind—makes the Bomb terrible by making its annihilation seem total and indiscriminate; but people of color such as Hughes have known better. How racist must Whites be to know and not care that, though they will still die, they will at least outlive Blacks by a few minutes? This is race hatred at its worst.

This may seem like a crude and insignificant distinction of White racism, but I argue that, as technologies of annihilation develop, it becomes increasingly important. My field, Ethnic Studies, teaches that in the United States the farthest-reaching and the deepest racisms inhere in ambient cultures of institutions and policies that need no hateful and viciously prejudiced people, that racism exists, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2021) argues, "without racists." Surely the growing literature of Americans living near nuclear facilities and suffering apparently radiation-borne illnesses and diseases suggests that Whites are targets, if not exactly of institutional racism, then of similar or

1 For a glimpse of testimonies, see *Unforgettable Fire* (Pantheon, 1981), a gathering of survivors' graphic art commissioned three decades later by Japan Broadcasting Corporation. Several Japanese memoirs and fictions have been published in English, perhaps most famously Keiji Nakazawa's multivolume manga *Barefoot Gen* (1982; Last Gasp, 2004) and Masuji Ibuse's *Black Rain* (1966; Kodansha International, 2012). Among books by U.S. writers living with nuclear culture, Teri Hein's *Atomic Farmgirl: Growing Up Right in the Wrong Place* (2000; Mariner, 2003) is a plainspoken account of a young woman who blames her community's, and family's, health issues on the nearby Hanford facility; Kathleen Flenniken's poems in *Plume* (University of Washington Press, 2012) tell of her experiences with the Hanford plant; and Lindsey A. Freeman's quirky memoir *This Atom Bomb in Me* (Redwood, 2019) indicts atomic culture around the Oak Ridge facility.

2 Perhaps the best studies of the Hanford problems are *Atomic Geography: A Personal History of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation*, by Melvin R. Adams (Washington State University Press, 2016); *On the Home Front: The Cold War Legacy of the Hanford Nuclear Site*, by Michele Stenehjem Gerber (1992; University of Nebraska Press, 1997); and *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*, by Kate Brown (Oxford University Press, 2013). Brown's book parallels the history of Hanford with the history of the Ozersk facility in the Soviet Union.

3 Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013), and Serizawa, *Inheritors* (Doubleday, 2020).

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related protocols of suffering. In her gathering of Hanford-area testimonies, almost all by Whites, Trisha T. Pritikin mentions that farmer Tom Bailie "remembers deformed animals born on the family farm and how the 'people from Hanford' would collect 'weird stuff' such as dead chickens, vegetables from the family garden, and water samples" (2020, p. 170). Bailie and his sister "suffer from serious health issues that they believe were caused by their childhood exposures to Hanford's radiation releases" (Pritikin, 2020, p. 170). This may not be the instant death of victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but still it is suffering directly caused by the building of the Bomb. If people of color can be complicit in nuclear warfare, then working Whites can suffer its devastations too.

Still, even eight decades after development and first use of the Bomb, histories of the suffering are blunted and obscured. Competing interests often displace those histories. An example is a recent book for young adults, Roseanne Montillo's (2021) *Atomic Women: The Untold Stories of the Scientists Who Helped Create the Nuclear Bomb*, which celebrates women whose work, often uncredited, contributed to the Manhattan Project that built the Bomb. Montillo's understandable concern with gender discrimination in science and engineering fields says nothing about the racism of the Pacific War and little about her subjects' being implicated in the Bomb's carnage. Near the end of her closing chapter, Montillo acknowledges that the Bomb "killed more than two hundred thousand people in the immediate aftermath," but she returns quickly to her complaint that women who contributed to its construction were denied credit (2021, p. 216). Feelings about the Bomb among these women depended, Montillo says, "on their personal views of science and on their beliefs about how such discoveries could help or hurt humanity," but the book ends on its overarching triumphalism: "Whatever their feelings, no one can deny, least of all themselves, that these female scientists were leaders in their fields" (2021, p. 219).

Other recent books on the Bomb trade narratives of victims' suffering for celebrations of scientific genius or the intensity and focused teamwork of the Manhattan Project. Curiously, too, in recent years a number of White women writers have published novels set in the Bomb project.[4] The protagonists of these novels are themselves young White women, hired into low-paying jobs at nuclear facilities in Oak Ridge, Hanford, or Los Alamos. They know only that their jobs are part of a mission that will help the war cause, but they are warned against asking for details. Because these are contemporary novels, the protagonists may take note of the presence and treatment of women and people of color working at the facilities, but their main concerns involve romantic entanglements with young male co-workers. To say that these are historical novels is only to say that they are set during wartime in worksites that are part of the war mission. Their authors do not otherwise implicate them in the terrors of the Bomb. And yet one of these novels, Sharma Shields's (2019) *The Cassandra*, set in Hanford, features a young White woman named Mildred, who suffers terrifying visions of the Bomb that she cannot possibly know she is helping to develop. She warns, "We're making a bomb that will kill thousands. Tens of thousands. It will maim even more. People will drop dead from the sickness it brings. Eyeballs will melt from their sockets. It will affect the land here, too. The very soil around us will give birth to demons" (Shields, 2019, p. 186). When Mildred tries to discuss her visions, she is regarded as crazy and is hospitalized—institutionalized. The value of Shields's novel is that, though her protagonist cannot know the Hanford mission, still, even if only through visions, she senses that she is implicated in the war and its terrors. Like protagonists in the other recent Bomb novels, she feels no ostensible race hatred. Unlike them, however, she does feel herself implicated in the kind of national race hatred that drives the Pacific War and builds the Bomb.

Institutional racism, rather than casting aside White hate as a motivating cause, merely transforms and redefines that hate. It may mask itself as nationalism or patriotism, as military strategy or even as national defense, but it is at its core race hatred. In a James Bond movie, the hero kills coolly, dispassionately, as a function of his job. He needs only to assume that his enemy must be killed, not even that the enemy is hateful. This is the martial code by which soldiers are urged to retain their sanity and their moral bearing: Do your job, and do not overthink it. Michael Walzer (2015) implies that "unjust wars" happen when soldiers and leaders *do* overthink and still kill indiscriminately, though he also seems to sense that no killing, not even the killing by the Bomb, can ever be entirely

4 For a sampling of these books, see Tarashea Nesbit (2014), *The Wives of Los Alamos* (Bloomsbury), and Janet Beard (2018), *The Atomic City Girls* (Morrow).

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indiscriminate. Postwar nuclear deterrence, says Walzer, depends on an assumption that preparing, even threatening to kill is still not killing, though it is "frighteningly close—else deterrence wouldn't 'work'—and it is in the nature of that closeness that the moral problem lies" (2015, p. 269). That very closeness seems to be at the heart of debates within the United States over gun control laws, though people obtain guns in an assumption that they will someday use them, and as more people have guns, more will die of guns. Believing otherwise may seem naïve, yet it is a belief held by political and military leaders defending nuclear arsenals. Asked in 1985 about deterrence, the secretary general of NATO said, "I don't believe it's worked; I *know* it's worked. There hasn't been a war for 40 years. ... there is no other way at the present time of keeping the peace for the world" (Siracusa, 2008, p. 62). Yet the "moral problem" that Walzer identifies inheres in the "closeness" of deterrence to mass killing, and a fear that the existence of nuclear arsenals sustains a terrifying sense that they will eventually be used. The secretary general's scant "40 years" were marked not by peace but by fear and terror, by the closeness of annihilation.

This fear needs to be discussed in racial contexts. At my state university in southeastern Washington, the spike in publicity given in the summer of 2020 to police killings of young Black people, including the videotaped murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, prompted the president's office (2020) to issue a public declaration of support for people of color, even to agree that "Black Lives Matter." Yet when I and several students of color called their attention to the fact that local police vehicles bore a decal saying "All Lives Matter," a racialized repudiation of the racial-justice movement, they were silent. The logic of "All Lives Matter" prizes the purported equality of the level playing field, assuming that Black lives deserve no "special treatment." It is a logic that opposes Affirmative Action and other programs that aim at overcoming institutional inequalities, a logic that can work only in an absence of preexisting inequalities, assuming that institutional racism does not exist. It acknowledges individual race hatred, but insists that institutions are neutral and thus equal and fair. It refuses the belief that racism is itself an institution, that it needs no personal animus to perpetuate and profit from its practice. It needs only the racial contract that Mills notices. That police officers, themselves agents of much institutional racism, would embrace an "All Lives Matter" logic should be expected. But that the very university administrators who declare that "Black Lives Matter" simultaneously give their tacit support to "All Lives Matter" betrays an indifference made inexcusable because it ignores institutional racism. Even in their "Black Lives Matter" declaration, administrators dared to assure people of color that local police would be involved in resolving problems of racialized law enforcement—completely oblivious to the fact that people of color distrust and fear police. It is a fear that permeates our communities and will end only after racialized policing ends. We can never be assured by Whites in power who assume that racism exists only in personal animus, and that equal treatment equals justice. In the same way, people can never be assured that the military and political leaders who build and maintain nuclear weapons will keep peace. And because these leaders define warmaking policy, people of color have extra reason to fear warmaking institutions.

When strategists know that a nuclear strike against the United States may kill many Whites, still they arrange for it to kill Blacks quicker and disproportionately. For more than anywhere else, military nuclear culture has abstracted and systematized racial hate. Theorists and scholars label manifestations of this kind of hate with terms such as necropolitics, bare life, death-in-life, social death, precarity, the already-dead. Gabriele Schwab says the Bomb creates a "nuclear necropolitics" (2020, p. 18). But largely unconcerned with hate, these theories name conditions of marginalization and suffering. These conditions are, as the theorists recognize, creations of institutional power that may or may not express hate. If a Black teenager is charged with a serious crime and tried as an adult, does it matter whether the court and the prosecutor are motivated by hate? Are they not merely following established protocols? While no one would deny that the Pacific War between the U.S. and Japan was largely a race war—even Paul Fussell (1988), who applauded the Bomb, believing that it saved his life by foreclosing his assignment to an invasion of Japan, acknowledges that the viciousness of the Pacific War was driven by racism on both sides—does it matter whether the crew of the bombers that dropped nuclear weapons hated the Japanese?

These are, however, the wrong questions. What does matter is that the institution acts as if it hates. Individual hatred targets individual victims, but when institutional policy targets many victims, each

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suffering as if from individual hatred, then the institution is merely organizing and systematizing the work of many haters. Purporting to represent the interests of a significant portion of a nation, even if not its majority, it acts as if all the people who make up that portion vented their rage and hatred of a targeted group. Whether the crew of the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 that dropped the Bomb on Hiroshima, hated Japanese matters less than that their institutional function was to perform an act of hate. People merely "doing their job" for an institution or a nation may therefore hurt and kill more than people who hate—but this is still, I argue, a kind of hate. The Bomb, as a weapon of national strategy and dominance, is also a weapon of national hate.

And this is why—notwithstanding laments over heartless euphemisms such as "collateral damage"—strategists build and use and defend the Bomb. Sven Lindqvist is not entirely correct to argue that "laws of war protect enemies of the same race, class, and culture" (2001, p. 2). For it is institutional hate that creates a certainty of "collateral damage"—a certainty that not only some "enemies of the same race, class, and culture" will die too, but that even some members of victorious dominant groups will die, indifferent sacrifices for the cause of annihilation. The winner with the Bomb says effectively, "Even if we all die, it will be our people who will stand last and longest."

This is the logic of racism today, as evolved in the racial contract, and it is the logic of the Bomb. Mathias Nilges offers a hopeful alternative in cultural politics, arguing that the "contemporary novel allows us to see that we have not in fact reached the categorical end of time," that it tries to provide "a historical reading of time"—an apparently alternative temporality, not unlike CPT (Colored People's Time) or Indian Time or Island Time (2021, p. 13). Racialized alternative temporalities such as CPT offer people of color a way of bearing racism, but they also envision better worlds. They give hope for the racially suffering (Streamas 2010). Indian Time in Jennifer Givhan's 2019 novel *Trinity Sight* saves the lives of a few characters. Major characters survive nuclear disaster by entering not exactly an alternative world but an indigenous world in which no such disaster can exist. If in the "real," surface world of quotidian mainstream existence, a person of color, already a target of racism, is also a target of a first nuclear strike, among the first and worst to suffer and die, that person is already a proleptic victim of nuclear war.

Of course this poses a peculiar nuclear-age problem for people of color. In Ethnic Studies we examine the history of institutional racism, a history of enslavement, dispossession, incarceration, exclusion, inequality. My department offers a 400-level course called Racism and Anti-Racism in a Global Context, in which, when I teach it, we focus as much on resistance as on injustice. Because injustice persists and evolves, resistance must adapt to its changing forms. Sometimes the work of anti-racism seems futile. Decades of lessons in racialized healthcare have not prevented enormous inequalities during the coronavirus pandemic.[5] Yet we struggle on, not only because we want to share visions of long arcs of justice with Martin Luther King, Jr, but also—and mostly—because the struggle is our only source of hope. Campaigns for reparations, police defunding, and sovereignty may seem unreachable, but at least they remain imaginable at the ends of those arcs of justice. Much less imaginable—even unimaginable—is release from the terrors of the threat of nuclear war. Knowing that wars are often waged over race, and that as people of color we are first and worst to be targeted, and that we have no access to technologies of peace equal to the scale of technologies of nuclear war, we feel particularly vulnerable and particularly terrorized. What form of resistance is possible or even imaginable? Even more soberly, why have technologies of annihilation become so powerful that nations are willing to sacrifice many of their racially privileged along with their racialized others?

A terrifying answer is that yes, nations have embraced technologies of annihilation in a mad passion to prove their superiority over their others, including racialized others. It is the logic of the racial contract. This reduces soldiers in nuclear war to disposable tools, and comports with Western simplifications of Japanese *kamikaze* fliers as mere suicidal tools, as if to say that leaders are indifferent to the deaths of their racial kin as long as they survive. A likelier answer is that such nations believe that they can survive—or at least the worthiest among them can survive—

5 See Ed Yong's (2022) work in *The Atlantic*, which finds that "[w]ithin every social class and educational tier, Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous people died at higher rates than white people. If all adults had died at the same rates as college-educated white people, 71 percent fewer people of color would have perished."

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nuclear war under conditions good enough to build a world even more to their liking and gain. In Ethnic Studies we teach, however, that racism persists because it is profitable, meaning that an exploitable racialized laboring class is necessary to the privileges and luxuries of ruling classes. So at least some racialized others must survive.

A still likelier answer is that a neoliberal world governed by short-term planning has failed to consider the particular consequences of nuclear war. That strategizing the disproportionate deaths of people of color risks a loss of both an exploitable laboring class and a community of inferiorized others to blame for economic shortfalls seems not to have entered the minds of military and political leaders. Nuclear deterrence is no substitute for long-term planning; it is a contingency of terror. Just as university administrators oblivious to the insult of "All Lives Matter" decals on police vehicles cannot possibly understand the ambient and perpetual terrors felt by students and faculty of color, national leaders oblivious to the false reassurances of deterrence cannot possibly understand the ambient and perpetual terrors felt by the Bomb's prospective targets. The Bomb is thus not only a race weapon but also a species weapon, though I have sought here to highlight its largely ignored racial function, mostly because the already ambient terrors of racism are compounded by its existence. Aforementioned concepts such as precarity, bare life, and necropolitics name the ambience of such terrors, but have so far failed to confront institutions with convincing accusations of their complicity. They have also largely failed to grasp the long-term effects on terrorized people of color.

Perhaps the best understanding of these terrors and their effects may be found in *Radiation and Revolution*, Sabu Kohso's excoriation of nuclear culture:

> The spatiotemporality of the apocalypse has been unleashed. This is not in the sense of eschatology or the end of the world as a singular event. Nor is it dystopia as opposed to utopia. It is a radical shift in the arrangement of material and immaterial powers. That is, the physical and corporeal contents of the battlefield between power and popular struggle have begun to be affected by the material limit of the expansive World and the tendency of its shrinking.... The present and future battleground is oriented by the shift from the process of the World's infinite development to the process of its infinite ending—entropy. In the infinite process of ending, the multitude of nation-states will have to reconstruct governance and development through a material *programming of stages* (as in the Apocalypse of John) while calculating the material limit of the natural resources of the earth. (2020, p. 126)

Whereas Robert Jay Lifton's 1965 book *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* studied the terrors visited upon people who had experienced nuclear war, aiming to caution against inflicting such terrors on the future, Kohso argues such caution is too late. Even without the actual use of atomic bombs, the existence of nuclear weapons has already imposed on the world what he calls the "spatiotemporality of the apocalypse." Ours is a world of "infinite ending." For people of color, already occupying the spatiotemporality of racial terror, this nuclear terror is no more bearable for being shared, albeit disproportionately, with many of the racially privileged. Nuclear racism merely underwrites the condition of "infinite ending."

How then do we end an ending? Kohso offers a not altogether satisfactory "apocalyptic communism," in which revolutionary spaces "are characterized by their weakness, humbleness, and invisibility, ... for neither could we nor would we want to make a strong unified force to beat and take over the nation-states and American and Chinese empires, but rather we would only want to decompose them from within in synchronicity" (2020, p. 159). In other words, fight war with peace. To the suspicion that such a strategy has never worked, Kohso might claim that its opposite, most ominously represented by the very idea of deterrence, has never worked, either.

People of color might therefore expand "Whitey hates us" to "Whitey hates almost everyone," for an end of racism cannot guarantee an end of nuclear threat. Under the racial contract, institutional policy normalizes and masks institutional race hatred. Yet much of my argument here rests on a suggestion that racism and nuclear threat are components of the same apocalyptic system, and that eradicating one promises greatly to diminish the terror of the other. Kohso's vision of decomposing

empires may just put life back into life. It may hint at the future that both Mills particularly and Ethnic Studies generally refuse to discuss. The logic of their analyses of racism, like the logic of the Bomb, accommodates no vision of a future. But an end of empire may well be an end of the Bomb.

So far Ethnic Studies has devoted little attention to racial implications of the Bomb, suggesting that even its scholarship gives up on the future. But contracts can be broken, and a violation of the racial contract may well empower people of color so that we may dismantle the Bomb.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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